

CROMWELL
AND OTHER
POEMS



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**CROMWELL AND OTHER
POEMS**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR—

POEMS OF MEN AND HOURS, 1911.

POEMS OF LOVE AND EARTH, 1912.

COPHETUA: A PLAY IN VERSE, 1911.

WILLIAM MORRIS: A CRITICAL STUDY, 1912.

SWINBURNE: AN ESTIMATE, 1913.

CROMWELL AND OTHER POEMS

BY
JOHN DRINKWATER

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ADVENTURES

TO

JOHN MASEFIELD

ADVENTURES

SYMBOLS

I SAW history in a poet's song,
In a river-reach and a gallows-hill,
In a bridal bed, and a secret wrong,
In a crown of thorns : in a daffodil.

I imagined measureless time in a day,
And starry space in a wagon-road,
And the treasure of all good harvests lay
In the single seed that the sower sowed.

My garden-wind had driven and havened again
All ships that ever had gone to sea,
And I saw the glory of all dead men
In the shadow that went by the side of me.

THE BUILDING

WHENCE these hods, and bricks of bright red
clay,
And swart men climbing ladders in the night ?

Stilled are the clamorous energies of day,
The streets are dumb, and, prodigal of light,
The lamps but shine upon a city of sleep.
A step goes out into the silence ; far
Across the quiet roofs the hour is tolled
From ghostly towers ; the indifferent earth
may keep
That ragged flotsam shielded from the cold
In earth's good time : not, moving among
men,
Shall he compel so fortunate a star.
Pavements I know, forsaken now, are strange,
Alien walks not beautiful, that then,
In the familiar day, are part of all
My breathless pilgrimage, not beautiful, but
dear.
The monotony of sound has suffered change,

The eddies of wanton sound are spent, and
clear
To bleak monotonies of silence fall.

And, while the city sleeps, in the central poise
Of quiet, lamps are flaming in the night,
Blown to long tongues by winds that moan
between

The growing walls, and throwing misty light
On swart men bearing bricks of bright red clay
In laden hods ; and ever the thin noise
Of trowels deftly fashioning the clean
Long lines that are the shaping of proud
thought.

Ghost-like they move between the day and day,
These men whose labour strictly shall be
wrought

Into the captive image of a dream.

Their sinews weary not, the plummet falls
To measured use from steadfast hands apace,
And momentarily the moist and levelled seam
Knits brick to brick and momentarily the walls
Bestow the wonder of form on formless space.

And whence all these ? The hod and plummet-
line,

The trowels tapping, and the lamps that shine
In long, dust-heavy beams from wall to wall,

The mortar and the bricks of bright red clay,
Ladder and corded scaffolding, and all
The gear of common traffic—whence are they ?
And whence the men who use them ?

When he came,
God upon chaos, crying in the name
Of all adventurous vision that the void
Should yield up man, and man, created, rose
Out of the deep, the marvel of all things made,
Then in immortal wonder was destroyed
All worth of trivial knowledge, and the close
Of man's most urgent meditation stayed
Even as his first thought—" Whence am I
sprung ? "

What proud ecstatic mystery was pent
In that first act for man's astonishment,
From age to unconfessing age, among
His manifold travel. And in all I see
Of common daily usage is renewed
This primal and ecstatic mystery
Of chaos bidden into many-hued
Wonders of form, life in the void create,
And monstrous silence made articulate.

Not the first word of God upon the deep
Nor the first pulse of life along the day
More marvellous than these new walls that
sweep

Starward, these lines that discipline the clay,
These lamps swung in the wind that send their
light

On swart men climbing ladders in the night.
No trowel-tap but sings anew for men
The rapture of quickening water and continent,
No mortared line but witnesses again
Chaos transfigured into lineament.

SEALED

THE doves call down the long arcades of pine,
The screaming swifts are tiring towards their
eaves,
And you are very quiet, O lover of mine.

No foot is on your ploughlands now, the song
Fails and is no more heard among your leaves
That wearied not in praise the whole day long.

I have watched with you till this twilight-fall,
The proud companion of your loveliness ;
Have you no word for me, no word at all ?

The passion of my thought I have given you,
Striving towards your passion, nevertheless,
The clover leaves are deepening to the dew,

And I am still unsatisfied, untaught.
You lie guarded in mystery, you go
Into your night, and leave your lover naught.

Would I were Titan with immeasurable thews
To hold you trembling, lover of mine, and know
To the full the secret savour that you use

Now to my tormenting. I would drain
Your beauty to the last sharp glory of it ;
You should work mightily through me, blood
and brain.

Your heart in my heart's mastery should burn,
And you before my swift and arrogant wit
Should be no longer proudly taciturn.

You should bend back astonished at my kiss,
Your wisdom should be armourer to my pride,
And you, subdued, should yet be glad of this.

The joys of great heroic lovers dead
Should seem but market-gossiping beside
The annunciation of our bridal bed.

And now, my lover earth, I am a leaf,
A wave of light, a bird's note, a blade sprung
Towards the oblivion of the sickled sheaf ;

A mere mote driven against your royal ease,
A tattered eager traveller among
The myriads beating on your sanctuaries.

I have no strength to crush you to my will,
Your beauty is invulnerably zoned,
Yet I, your undefeated lover still,

Exulting in your sap am clear of shame,
And biding with you patiently am throned
Above the flight of desolation's aim.

You may be mute, bestow no recompense
On all the thriftless leaguers of my soul—
I am at your gates, O lover of mine, and thence

Will I not turn for any scorn you send,
Rebuked, bemused, yet is my purpose whole,
I shall be striving towards you till the end.

IN LADY STREET

ALL day long the traffic goes
In Lady Street by dingy rows
Of sloven houses, tattered shops—
Fried fish, old clothes and fortune-tellers—
Tall trams on silver-shining rails,
With grinding wheels and swaying tops,
And lorries with their corded bales,
And screeching cars. “Buy, buy!” the sellers
Of rags and bones and sickening meat
Cry all day long in Lady Street.

And when the sunshine has its way
In Lady Street, then all the grey
Dull desolation grows in state
More dull and grey and desolate,
And the sun is a shamefast thing,
A lord not comely-housed, a god
Seeing what gods must blush to see,
A song where it is ill to sing,
And each gold ray spiteously
Lies like a gold ironic rod.

Yet one grey man in Lady Street
Looks for the sun. He never bent
Life to his will, his travelling feet
Have scaled no cloudy continent,
Nor has the sickle-hand been strong.
He lives in Lady Street ; a bed,
Four cobwebbed walls.

But all day long
A time is singing in his head
Of youth in Gloucester lanes. He hears
The wind among the barley-blades,
The tapping of the woodpeckers
On the smooth beeches, thistle-spades
Slicing the sinewy roots ; he sees
The hooded filberts in the copse
Beyond the loaded orchard trees,
The netted avenues of hops ;
He smells the honeysuckle thrown
Along the hedge. He lives alone,
Alone—yet not alone, for sweet
Are Gloucester lanes in Lady Street.

Aye, Gloucester lanes. For down below
The cobwebbed room this grey man plies
A trade, a coloured trade. A show
Of many-coloured merchandise
Is in his shop. Brown filberts there,
And apples red with Gloucester air,

And cauliflowers he keeps, and round
Smooth marrows grown on Gloucester ground,
Fat cabbages and yellow plums,
And gaudy brave chrysanthemums.
And times a glossy pheasant lies
Among his store, not Tyrian dyes
More rich than are the neck-feathers ;
And times a prize of violets,
Or dewy mushrooms satin-skinned,
And times an unfamiliar wind
Robbed of its woodland favour stirs
Gay daffodils this grey man sets
Among his treasure.

All day long

In Lady Street the traffic goes
By dingy houses, desolate rows
Of shops that stare like hopeless eyes.
Day long the sellers cry their cries,
The fortune-tellers tell no wrong
Of lives that know not any right,
And drift, that has not even the will
To drift, toils through the day until
The wage of sleep is won at night.
But this grey man heeds not at all
The hell of Lady Street. His stall
Of many-coloured merchandise
He makes a shining paradise,

As all day long chrysanthemums
He sells, and red and yellow plums
And cauliflowers. In that one spot
Of Lady Street the sun is not
Ashamed to shine and send a rare
Shower of colour through the air ;
The grey man says the sun is sweet
On Gloucester lanes in Lady Street.

TRAVEL TALK

Ladywood, 1912

To Ernest de Sélincourt

To the high hills you took me, where desire,
Daughter of difficult life, forgets her lures,
And hope's eternal tasks no longer tire,
And only peace endures.
Where anxious prayer becomes a worthless
 thing
Subdued by muted praise,
And asking nought of God and life we bring
The conflict of long days
Into a moment of immortal poise
Among the scars and proud unbuilt spires,
Where, seeking not the triumphs and the joys
So treasured in the world, we kindle fires
That shall not burn to ash, and are content
To read anew the eternal argument.

Nothing of man's intolerance we know
Here, far from man, among the fortified hills,
Nor of his querulous hopes.

To what may we attain ? What matter, so
We feel the unwearied virtue that fulfils
These cloudy crests and rifts and heathered
slopes
With life that is and seeks not to attain,
For ever spends nor ever asks again ?

To the high hills you took me. And we saw
The everlasting ritual of sky
And earth and the waste places of the air,
And momentarily the change of changeless law
Was beautiful before us, and the cry
Of the great winds was as a distant prayer
From a massed people, and the choric sound
Of many waters moaning down the long
Veins of the hills was as an undersong ;
And in that hour we moved on holy ground.

To the high hills you took me. Far below
Lay pool and tarn locked up in shadowy sleep ;
Above, we watched the clouds unhasting go
From hidden crest to crest ; the neighbour
sheep
Cropped at our side, and swift on darkling
wings
The hawks went sailing down the valley wind,
The rock-bird chattered shrilly to its kind ;
And all these common things were holy things.

From ghostly Skiddaw came the wind in
flight

By Langdale Pikes to Coniston's broad brow,
From Coniston to proud Helvellyn's height,
The eloquent wind, the wind that even now
Whispers again its story gathered in
For seasons of much traffic in the ways
Where men so straitly spin
The garment of unfathomable days.

To the high hills you took me. And we turned
Our feet again towards the friendly vale,
And passed the banks whereon the bracken
burned

And the last foxglove bells were spent and pale,
Down to a hallowed spot of English land
Where Rotha dreams its way from mere to
mere,

Where one with undistracted vision scanned
Life's far horizons, he who sifted clear
Dust from the grain of being, making song
Memorial of simple men and minds
Not bowed to cunning by deliberate wrong,
And conversed with the spirit of the winds,
And knew the guarded secrets that were sealed
In pool and pine, petal and vagrant wing,
Throning the shepherd folding from the field,
Robing anew the daffodils of spring.

We crossed the threshold of his home and stood
Beside his cottage hearth where once was told
The day's adventure drawn from fell and wood,
And wisdom's words and love's were manifold,
Where, in the twilight, gossip poets met
To read again their peers of older time,
And quiet eyes of gracious women set
A bounty to the glamour of the rhyme.

There is a wonder in a simple word
That reinhabits fond and ghostly ways,
And when within the poet's walls we heard
One white with ninety years recall the days
When he upon his mountain paths was seen,
We answered her strange bidding and were made
One with the reverend presence who had been
Steward of kingly charges unbetrayed.

And to the little garden-close we went,
Where he at eventide was wont to pass
To watch the willing day's last sacrament,
And the cool shadows thrown along the grass,
To read again the legends of the flowers,
Lighten with song th' obscure heroic plan,
To contemplate the process of the hours,
And think on that old story which is man.
The lichened apple-boughs that once had spent
Their blossoms at his feet, in twisted age

Yet knew the wind, and the familiar scent
Of heath and fern made sweet his hermitage.
And, moving so beneath his cottage-eaves,
His song upon our lips, his life a star,
A sign, a storied peace among the leaves,
Was he not with us then ? He was not far.

To the high hills you took me. We had seen
Much marvellous traffic in the cloudy ways,
Had laughed with the white waters and the
green,
Had praised and heard the choric chant of
praise,
Communed anew with the undying dead,
Resung old songs, retold old fabulous things,
And, stripped of pride, had lost the world and
led
A world refashioned as unconquered kings.

And the good day was done, and there again
Where is your home of quietness we stood,
Far from the sight and sound of travelling men,
And watched the twilight climb from Lady-
wood

Above the pines, above the visible streams,
Beyond the hidden sources of the rills,
Bearing the season of uncharted dreams
Into the silent fastness of the hills.

Peace on the hills, and in the valleys peace ;
And Rotha's moaning music sounding clear ;
The passing-song of wearied winds that cease,
Moving among the reeds of Rydal Mere ;
The distant gloom of boughs that still unscarred
Beside their poet's grave due vigil keep—
With us were these, till night was throned and
starred
And bade us to the benison of sleep.

CHALLENGE

You fools behind the panes who peer
At the strong black anger of the sky,
Come out and feel the storm swing by,
Ay, take its blow on your lips, and hear
The wind in the branches cry.

No. Leave us to the day's device,
Draw to your blinds and take your ease,
Grow peak'd in the face and crook'd in the
knees ;

Your sinews could not pay the price
When the storm goes through the trees.

POSSESSIONS

“ BRING all the sorrows that you bear,
And I will give them harbourage,
And I will tame them unaware
Of all their dark uncomely rage.”

“ I will not let my sorrows go
While I am subject to the sun,
There might be nothing then to know
If all my sorrowing were done.

“ I do not hoard my sorrows up
As usurers of infirmity,
But all the sorrows in my cup
Are touchstones of my ecstasy.”

THE ANALYST

ARMoured in arrogance of youth,
You look on life, assaying her,
Swear lightly this or that for truth
Instancing her your arbiter,
And coldly measure her.

She stands before you mute, her arm
Hiding the laughter of her face,
You register this frail alarm,
And moralise the modest grace
That here has dwelling-place.

Oh youth, beware the day when she,
No longer patient of your jests,
Covers your calm with mockery,
Confronts you with her blood's behests
And most bewildering breasts.

OLD WOMAN IN MAY

“ OLD woman by the hedgerow
In gown of withered black,
With beads and pins and buttons
And ribbons in your pack—
How many miles do you go ?
To Dumbleton and back ? ”

“ To Dumbleton and back, sir,
And round by Cotsall Hill,
I count the miles at morning,
At night I count them still,
A Jill without a Jack, sir,
I travel with a will.”

“ It's little men are paying
For such as you can do,
You with the grey dust in your hair
And sharp nails in your shoe,
The young folks go a-Maying,
But what is May to you ? ”

“ I care not what they pay me
 While I can hear the call
 Of cattle on the hillside,
 And watch the blossoms fall
 In a churchyard where maybe
 I'll meet him after all.”

DOMINION

I WENT beneath the sunny sky
When all things bowed to June's desire,—
The pansy with its steadfast eye,
The blue shells on the lupin spire,

The swelling fruit along the boughs,
The grass grown heady in the rain,
Dark roses fitted for the brows
Of queens great kings have sung in vain ;

My little cat with tiger bars,
Bright claws all hidden in content ;
Swift birds that flashed like darkling stars
Across the cloudy continent ;

The wiry-coated fellow curled
Stump-tailed upon the sunny flags ;
The bees that sacked a coloured world
Of treasure for their honey-bags.

And all these things seemed very glad,
The sun, the flowers, the birds on wing,
The jolly beasts, the furry-clad
Fat bees, the fruit, and everything.

But gladder than them all was I,
Who, being man, might gather up
The joy of all beneath the sky,
And add their treasure to my cup,

And travel every shining way,
And laugh with God in God's delight,
Create a world for every day,
And store a dream for every night.

A SABBATH DAY

IN FIVE WATCHES

I. MORNING

(*To M. C.*)

You were three men and women two,
And well I loved you, all of you,
 And well we kept the Sabbath day.
The bells called out of Malvern town,
But never bell could call us down
 As we went up the hill away.

Was it a thousand years ago
Or yesterday that men were so
 Zealous of creed and argument ?
Here wind is brother to the rain,
And the hills laugh upon the plain,
 And the old brain-gotten feuds are spent.

Bring lusty laughter, lusty jest,
Bring each the song he names the best,
 Bring eager thought and speech that's keen,
Tell each his tale and tell it out,
The only shame be prudent doubt,
 Bring bodies where the lust is clean.

II. FULL DAY

(*To K. D.*)

WE moved along the gravelled way
Between the laurels and the yews,
Some touch of old enchantment lay
About us, some remembered news
Of men who rode among the trees
With burning dreams of Camelot,
Whose names are beauty's litanies,
As Galahad and Launcelot.

We looked along the vaulted gloom
Of boughs unstripped of winter's bane,
As for some pride of scarf and plume
And painted shield and broidered rein,
And through the cloven laurel walls
We searched the darkling pines and pale
Beech-boles and woodbine coronals,
As for the passing of the Grail.

But Launcelot no travel keeps,
For brother Launcelot is dead,
And brother Galahad he sleeps
This long while in his quiet bed,

And we are all the knights that pass
Among the yews and laurels now.
They are but fruit among the grass,
And we but fruit upon the bough.

No coloured blazon meets us here
Of all that courtly company,
Elaine is not, nor Guenevere,
The dream is but of dreams that die.
But yet the purple violet lies
Beside the golden daffodil,
And women strong of limb and wise
And fierce of blood are with us still.

And never through the woodland goes
The Grail of that forgotten quest,
But still about the woodland flows
The sap of God made manifest
In boughs that labour to their time,
And birds that gossip secret things,
And eager lips that seek to rhyme
The latest of a thousand springs.

III. DUSK

(*To E. S. V.*)

WE come from the laurels and daffodils
Down to the homestead under the fell,
We've gathered our hunger upon the hills,
And that is well.

Howbeit to-morrow gives or takes,
And leads to barren or flowering ways,
We've a linen cloth and wheaten cakes,
For which be praise.

Here in the valley at lambing-time
The shepherd folk of their watching tell
While the shadows up to the beacon climb,
And that is well.

Let be what may when we make an end
Of the laughter and labour of all our days,
We've men to friend and women to friend,
For whom be praise.

IV. EVENSONG

(To B. M.)

COME, let us tell it over,
Each to each by the fireside,
How that earth has been a swift adventure
for us,
And the watches of the day as a gay song and
a right song,
And now the traveller wind has found a bed,
And the sheep crowd under the thorn.

Good was the day and our travelling,
And now there is evensong to sing.

Night, and along the valleys
Watch the eyes of the homesteads.
The dark hills are very still and still are the
stars.
Patiently under the ploughlands the wheat
moves and the barley.
The secret hour of love is upon the sky,
And our thought in praise is aflame.

Sing evensong as well we may
For our travel upon this Sabbath day.

Earth, we have known you truly,
Heard your mutable music,
Have been your lovers and felt the savour of
 you,
And you have quickened in us the blood's fire
 and the heart's fire,
We have wooed and striven with you and made
 you ours
By the strength sprung out of your loins.

 Lift the latch on its twisted thong,
 And an end be made of our evensong.

V. NIGHT

(To H. S. S.)

THE barriers of sleep are crossed
And I alone am yet awake,
Keeping another Pentecost
For that new visitation's sake
Of life descending on the hills
In blackthorn bloom and daffodils.

At peace upon my pillow lain
I celebrate the spirit come
In spring's immutable youth again
Across the lands of Christendom,
I hear in all the choral host
The coming of the Holy Ghost.

The sacrament of bough and blade,
Of populous folds and building birds
I take, till now an end is made
Of praise and ceremonial words,
And I too turn myself to keep
The quiet festival of sleep.

March 1913.

WARRANTY

FULL-SAILED upon imagination's tide,
I was as God ; I compassed time and space
In one swift glance ; the sorrows on the face
Of man scorched through me ; my creation
cried

For word whereby I should be justified,
For news of my most secret thoughts of grace,
And then was I afraid in my proud place,
Having no word though man was crucified.

Then some forgotten virtue that had passed
Out of my breath to man flowed back to me,
The warrior hope that was his holy bread,
And I was patient then and comforted,
Knowing that things desired should surely be,
That all he sought I must bestow at last.

LINES FOR THE OPENING OF THE BIRMINGHAM REPERTORY THEATRE

To you good ease, and grace to love us well :
To us good ease, and grace some tale to tell
Worthy your love. We stand with one consent
To plead anew a holy argument—
For art is holy. We, to whom there falls
The charge that men may see within these walls
The comely chronicle of comely plays,
You, who shall quicken us with blame or praise,
Desire alike but this, that here shall spring
Such issue of our labour as may bring
Fresh laurels to the altars that have known
Service of men whose passion might atone
For worlds than this more faithless, men whose
names

Are very life—aye, swift and urgent flames
Of living are they. These are over us
To lighten all our travel : Aeschylus,
Euripides, the Sophoclean song,
And Aristophanes who captured wrong
In nets of laughter, lords of the Attic stage,
The fourfold Greek dominion ; and the age

Of nameless poets when the hope began
To quicken from the blood of *Everyman*
Into the splendour of Marlowe's kingly lust
Of kingly life, the glory that thieves nor rust
Can ever spoil, whose name is manifold—
Ford, Massinger, Dekker, Webster aureoled
With light of hell made holy, Middleton,
Chapman, Beaumont and Fletcher, aye, and
one

Whom even these the lords of beauty's passion
Might crown for beauty's high imperial fashion
In classic calm of intellectual rule,

Ben Jonson. Sirs, I am nor wit nor fool
To speak in praise of him whose name is
praise,

Whose word is on the forehead of the days,
Shakespeare, our master tried and proved how
well,

Mortality's immortal chronicle.

Under the warrant of these men we sail,
And theirs whose later labour these might hail,
Congreve and Otway : the Good-Natured Man,
Proud tattered Oliver : Dick Sheridan,
Who played at passion but free-born of wit
Put scandal out to school and laughed at it ;
These few that stand between the golden age
When poets made a marvel of the stage

And—do we dare to dream it?—an age that
stirred

But yesterday, whereof the dawning word,—
Spoken when Ibsen spake, and here re-set
To many tunes on lips untutored yet
For speech Olympian, albeit pure of will,—
Shall ripen into witness that we still
Are countrymen of those glad poets dead ;
The seed is sown, the barren days are sped.

And they who sowed, are sowing? He,
beguiled

By who shall say what envious madness, Wilde,
Misfortune's moth and laughter's new wing-
feather,

Remembering now no black despiteful weather :
Hankin, and he, the cleanser of our day,
Whose art is both a Preface and a Play,
And he who pities, as poets have pitied, life
Of *Justice* reft, so driven and torn in *Strife*,
And one who cries in *Waste* some news of man,
And one who finds in the bruised hearts of *Nan*
And *Pompey* tragic and old yet timeless things :
And that dead Playboy, and his peer who
sings

Yet of Cuchulain by the western sea—
Of these is sown the seed that yet shall be
A heavy-waggoned harvest, masters mine,

Gathered by men whom now the immoderate
wine
Of song is making ready.

In these walls
Look not for that light trickery that falls
To death at birth, wrought piecemeal at the will
Of apes who seek to ply their mimic skill :
Here shall the player work as work he may,
Yet shall he work in service of the play.
Nor shall you here find pitiful release
From life's large pressure, nay, but new
increase
Of life made urgent by these master-men
Who are our captains. Life, and life again—
Tragic or brave, free-witted, gentle, signed
Of beauty's passion or the adventurous mind,
Or light as orchard blossom, motley wear
But life's wear always—that shall be our care
And all shall surely follow. What may be
Hereafter—to the heavens, to us to see
No will transgressing on the poet's wish,
To you to judge the meat before the dish.
May you that watch and we that serve so grow
In wisdom as adventuring we go
That some unwavering light from us may shine.
We have the challenge of the mighty line—
God grant us grace to give the countersign.

THE INVIOABLE HOUR

If ever you with riches should be bought,
And all your life become a little thing,
And all the bright adventure of your thought
Be curbed ; if time should bring
The passionate promise of your youth to
naught ;

If you should never find the lordly will
To stir your beauty to a flame of flowers,
If, robed in precious merchandise, you still
Are subject to the powers
That bruise the grain God sows along the hill ;

If you should sell yourself in any wise
Save at love's bidding, and so fall to be
Life's drudge and outcast, yet, for that your
eyes
No longer then should see
The light that once they borrowed from the
skies,

You went of your own sorrow unaware,
Save in swift moments of remembered days
When still the stars were tangled in your
 hair,
And all your limbs were praise,
And all your movement as a lyric prayer—

Should it be so, will you remember this,
That once a man, who watched your beauty
 grow,
And knew the waxing peril of your kiss,
And saw you turn and go,
Unweaponed, towards the world's untried
 abyss,

Made in his heart a record that your soul
Immortal beauty had, that you were strong
To keep the proudest purpose of you whole,
To meet the proudest wrong
Should look your vagrant spirit to control,—

Will you remember this? The days may
 prove
The things alone of little worth in you,
You may beguile yourself that life and love,
So seared, have had their due,
That you in your right constellation move.

It may be so ; and you may violate
The seedling hope sown in a waste of fears,
Yet in his thought shall you be consecrate
With your immortal peers,
Your laughter true, your soul immaculate.

LIEGEWOMAN

You may not wear immortal leaves

Nor yet go laurelled in your days,

But he believes

Who loves you with most intimate praise

That none on earth has ever gone,

In whom a cleanlier spirit shone.

You may be unremembered when

Our chronicles are piled in dust :

No matter then—

None ever bore a lordlier lust

To know the savour sweet or sour

Down to the dregs of every hour.

And this your epitaph shall be—

“ Within life’s house her eager words

Continually

Lightened as wings of arrowy birds :

She was life’s house-fellow, she knew

The passion of him, soul and thew.”

LOVERS TO LOVERS

Our love forsworn
Was very love upon a day ;
Bitterness now, forlorn,
This tattered love once went as proud a way
As any born.

You well have kept
Your love from all corrupting things,
Your house of love is swept
And bright for use ; whatso each season brings
You may accept

In pride. But we ?
Our date of love is dead. Our blind
Brief moment was to be
The sum, yet was it signed as yours, and
signed
Indelibly.

RECKONING

I HEARD my love go laughing
 Beyond the bolted door,
I saw my love go riding
 Across the windy moor,
And I would give my love no word
Because of evil tales I heard.

Let fancy men go laughing,
 Let light men ride away,
Bruised corn is not for my mill,
 What's paid I will not pay,—
And so I thought because of this
Gossip that poisoned clasp and kiss.

Four hundred men went riding,
 And he the best of all,
A jolly man for labour,
 A sinewy man and tall ;
I watched him go beyond the hill,
And shaped my anger with my will.

At night my love came riding
 Across the dusky moor,
And other two rode with him
 Who knocked my bolted door,
And called me out and bade me see
How quiet a man a man could be.

And now the tales that stung me
 And gave my pride its rule,
Are worth a beggar's broken shoe
 Or the sermon of a fool,
And all I know and all I can
Is, false or true, he was my man.

LORD OF TIME

THAT I, some nameless æons hence,
May be a god, god fashioning,
With stars to break or recompense,
Is that so great a thing ?

It may be so. Some giant hand
May finger me as excellent clay,
Till I shall walk a cleaner land
In a more urgent day.

To the artificer joy. But now
Great days and passion of earth I crave,
True lips, the red rose of the bough,
The white rose of the wave.

There are known walls wherein I move
In joy no promised joy can veil,
And all my mastery of love
Is as a fireside tale.

The word that shapes a word again,
The storied song, the coloured year,

Laughter and tragic trust of men,
And fear that will not fear,

That straw that blows about the gate,
Those eyes that are my other sight,—
Of such are builded the estate
I know before the night.

Life and fierce life and life alone
Here upon earth I seek and claim,
Till my proud flesh again is thrown
To sea and wind and flame.

The gods are just ; eternity
May gird me for its lordlier clime ;
But here, where time encircles me,
I am a lord of time.

CROMWELL

TO

FREDERIC HARRISON

CROMWELL

PROLOGUE

To shape in song a perishable theme,
Though cunning be the craft and richly wrought
The utterance in swift and chiming speech,
May not avail against assaulting time ;
High words, and curious skill, the golden stars
Set by the singer round about the song,
Shall crumble with the house wherein they
serve ;

Clothing mortality, they too shall pass
And go the way of unremembered things,
Sending no marvellous beauty through the
world.

Then be my song of memorable days,
That so, albeit of its proper power
It gathers up no unassembled strains
Of fugitive wonder far from common ears
Withdrawn, nor shapes the bodiless things of
dream,

It may go proudly chartered of the pride
And large heroic fates whereof it sings.

Of stern and memorable days and men ;
Of that far hour when Europe heard the sound
Of this our England crying in the dark
Against the tyrannous humour in her blood,
The dark abomination that was borne
At her own breast, the fanged and evil menace,
When peril made the daily loves of men
Careful and cunning, and a sword was set
Upon the threshold, yea, upon the hearth,
And many houses were divided. When
A rumour ran from Cornwall on to Kent,
Across the fens to Tweed, by wold and moor,
Down to the Severn marches and the sea,
Of a risen might and a sword and a rusting
sheath.

Of these my song. And of the will of God
Creating in the heart of one a fire
Unquenchable beneath the dust of time ;
Of one who watched the shadows folding in
All beautiful goings in the lives of men,
And heard the arrogant mastery on the lips
Of spoilers of the spirit's husbandry,
Yet gave no witness of his vigil, kept
His simple way among a simple folk
Where Ely's tower tops the level lands
Until the middle-watches of his day,
Then answered God, stepped out with soul aflame,

Sword-girt and consecrate, to hurl abroad
The thunders of a people newly clad
In armour forged in humble, holy fires,
Their brows bared to the dawn, exultant,
free.

THE FIRST INTERLUDE

OF THE LEAVEN

*SHALL the holy of earth make earth as a fruitful
field*

*With nothing barren, a treasure unspoiled of tares?
Shall a leaven of godlike leaders, pitiful, steeled,
Bring heaven to earth untimely and unawares?*

*The song of the surest singer, the lordliest might
Of the chosen hero, the scars of the strictest rod,
The witness borne of the purest anchorite—
Shall they hasten by one brief day the coming of
God?*

*Since man was man, and battled and loved and
died,
And sinned and bowed in repentance and rose
redeemed,
Have starrier heights laughed back to his laugh-
ing pride—
Does he dream a comelier thing than once he
dreamed?*

*Song being new, is Homer yet outsung—
What sword than Sigurd's yet of holier worth—
For Plato's word what new prophetic tongue—
What Nazareth has seen what lovelier birth ?*

*We are fierce in love, but as dust in the dead
years are*

*Forgotten Davids, Antonies fierce as we,
We set a chart to the worlds between star and star,
Yet Drake went out to the foam of a stranger sea.*

*Not stouter our arms than the forthright arms of
our sires,*

*Our orchards of dream not richer in scarlet and
gold,*

*Our hearts are tempered in immemorial fires,
We are brute and god as the brute and god of old ;*

*So be it. Yet the eager and fearless hand,
The searching word and the clean and naked
rhyme,*

*Heroic kisses of passion,—by these withstand
Our mountain altars the weariless winds of
time.*

*Earth we may know, but of heaven no more than
the cloud*

Of marvellous light that veils the ultimate shrine,

*Yet we who would bear us rejoicing, crying aloud—
“ We inherit the earth, and are worthy, O Lord,
of our line,”*

*Have need of the dreamers who bear to the
market-place*

*Tidings of heaven, that we re-born at the birth
Of the vision of heavenly beauty and holy grace
May cherish anew the holy beauty of earth.*

*We are men, and godhead is far, and it shall
not be*

*That men as gods without flaw shall travel to death,
Yet a rumour of stars is with us, the light of a
sea*

No ship has ventured, the savour of holier breath

*Than any of love most lovely, and well we need
The Titans of men, the prophets of golden tongue,
That man may labour his season as man indeed,
Signed of the urgent will that the years have sung.*

THE CALL

News out of London town. So the king calls
His commons up again. The twilight falls
Over the eastland counties, and he stands,
Hearing the corncrakes call across his lands,
Oliver Cromwell, fiery-souled, clear-souled,
And looks upon the night-tide aureoled
With rings of palest silver. And aloud
The wrongs of England smote his ears, the
proud

Complaint of patriot martyrs, and the cry
Of mercy crushed, of right and love set by
As common bawds, he saw the pitiful face
Of life dishonoured in the market-place.
Oliver Cromwell, keeper of the gate
Of one proud temple yet inviolate,
Looked upward to the stars and prayed that
then

He might not be unworthy among men
To serve, if so to service God should call
His arm and spirit. Let the word but fall,
And he would dedicate unto the Lord
The terrible arc of one great flaming sword.

“ O God, there is about the land a thing
Not cleanly ; we, Thy daily bread who taste,
Are but unworthy labourers, we waste
Thy treasure, Lord, and Thy compassioning.
Thy hand has given us most holy place,
Yet are Thy judgments put aside, unheard ;
The whirlwind scatters north and south Thy
word

Into the dust, and hidden is Thy face.
Forgive us, Lord, and teach us ; let Thy light
Shine out upon us. And, O Lord, if now
Thy summons is to me to set my brow
Unto Thy battles, I, albeit slight
And weak as chaff before the thrasher's flail,
Am yet Thy servant. In Thy house are met
Unrighteous men and faithless, and they set
In bonds Thy children. Lord, might I avail
But as the meanest of the men whose laws
Are Thine alone, Thy peace their sole estate,
My sword, my will, my love are consecrate
Unto Thy cause, my God, unto Thy cause.”

THE SECOND INTERLUDE

OF OUR WORSHIP

*PRAISING the great, what is it that we praise ?
Arrows of secret aim ; the shaft of toil,
Winged with the fugitive loveliness of days,
Barbed with the tragic jealousies that soil*

*Love's clean account. And such indeed are we,
Only the archer drew a weaker string,
Driving us forth upon the day to be
Duller of edge, less beautiful of wing.*

*We also toil, but with a lowlier skill,
We cherish beauty, from a lowlier gate,
We love and loathe as they, but is our will
Paler to love, less terrible to hate.*

*We are the shadows cast of these we praise,
They are the slumbering giants in us freed,
Bidding us on to unattempted ways.
Praising the great we praise our hidden seed.*

THE COMING

How marvellous the weaving of the loom
In the habitation of the God of days.
How are we blind upon our pilgrimage
Who cry aloud that we too read the skies
With wisdom, being heritors of all
The garnered understanding of the world.
Surely the loom now fashions in this wise
Or that, and when it throws the woven web
Down to our twilight corner it will bear
This shape or that, so patterned, and the gold
Will flash upon those fringes, and on these
The shining colours surely will be set—
Surely it will be so. Through clamorous years
Men beat their souls out on the relentless iron,
All charitable things to chaos fall,
All issues are perplexed, all purpose dimmed,
And supplicating hands go up against
They know not what of peril. Out of peace
Comes menace and confusion ; through the land
Men labour in fear and walk by sceptred dread,
And all the world cries out for some tried hand,
Some spirit tempered in the councils of men

To speak aright and bring deliverance.
The cry goes up, and, moving from the ranks
Of troubled watch, comes one with brows knit

up

With two score years of labour on the earth,
Oliver Cromwell, fiery-souled, clear-souled,
A ploughshare handle fashioning to a hilt.

O place of man, high on the windy scar
That o'ertops desolation and the void ;
O heart of man that knoweth not the end
Of all thy pride though fiery witnesses
Are all about thee loud in prophecy ;
O harpers that are harping in our ears,
What are the secret issues of your song ?
Charles, King of England by the grace of God,
Charles, King of England—and God's finger
moves.

THE THIRD INTERLUDE

OF THE CAPTAINS

*AND these who search with so undaunted eyes
The secret terrible fastness of the skies,
Enduring even the sun,
How fare they, reconceiving paradise ?*

*Love for the blind who follow do they bear,
Pity, desire that here or otherwhere
Worthily may be won
By men who drudge the praise of men who dare.*

*“ Compassion of the chosen of the days
Leaven with hope the vigil that in ways
Of driven dust we keep ;
We can bestow the oil, the urn, the bays,*

*These only on your service. Yet we know
That you, O chosen, mightily will go
Into the folds of sleep,
Not measuring the little we bestow.”*

*And, eager for love's communion, nevertheless
The chosen labour on in loneliness,
Knowing that we not yet,
Being weak, may stand beside them in the press.*

*And they are sorrowful that we, being born
Most worthy for love's use, the proudest thorn
That on love's brow is set,
Are worthy still the baser things of scorn.*

*They labour far, but know not of the end,
Whether the labour is well-wrought, or bend
The issues to their will,
Or shall they one day call the master, Friend.*

*They turn to us,—our willing lips are weak,
They turn to him,—he will in nowise speak,
So, lonely labourers still,
They break the earth, and sow, and daily seek*

*Signs of the hidden harvest, and they scan
Those great immobile skies, and pray and plan
Towards the unshaped desire,
The unabashed and fervent dream of man.*

*And they are proud, these chosen, they are proud,
Being most like gods among us, and endowed
With the great tongues of fire,
And fearing nought of battle-scathe or cloud*

*Hell-fostered, or the menace of the night ;
Stricken, they bow not, neither turn to flight,
Till death shall silence all
They are the holy legionaries of light.*

*And they are glad. Let all the firmament
Proclaim their will, or be their will misspent
And into ruin fall,
Their trust is unbetrayed : they are content.*

EDGEHILL

AMONG the gold and scarlet of the year,
Their horses crushing fallen leaves and husks
Of beech and chestnut and the sapless cups
Of acorns down into the sodden earth,
A coloured host went down the Warwick lanes,
With laughing faces set for London town.

In shining panoply and waving plume,
With pike and burnished musket, jewelled hilt
And graven scabbard, crusted broidery,
Pennon and standard floating on the day,
And precious housings wrought with curious
care,

Moved on the battled ranks of Charles the king.
In the king's counsel gathered gentle hearts,
Not loving change, fearing the portents tossed
About the land, heirs of an ancient tale ;
And fiery captains seeking not the truth,
Not asking aught of cause or circumstance,
Mere comets curbless in the skies of war ;
And with them fawning tricksters climbing up
The stairs of chance ; and simple gentlemen
Who stood among the legions of the king,

For that they were the king's. In level rows
All girt and furnished for the cannonade
Or arm-length grapple or wide-flung assault
Followed the ranks of chartered soldiery,
High-hearted, fearless, ripe in all the rule
And grammar of war, yet in their souls no
fire

Of passion spun into an arrowy light.
And master of all, anointed of the Lord,
Divinely chosen, setting on his will
The sign of proud and unassailable right,
Abiding nought of question among men,
Rode Charles the king, dreamer of twisted
dreams,

Hearing all counsels, speaking all men fair,
Prey to all bidders for a kingly pledge,
Yet governed ever by one sovran rule—
The tattered sway of his own motley heart.
Laughter and jest and lusty ballad tunes,
And sound of sound begotten broke the hush
That lay, on that grey Sabbath afternoon,
Along the hills of Warwick oak, and set
A peace about the valleys. Lightly rode
The legions of the king for London town.

And, moving in their tracks down Warwick
lanes
As a great silent shadow, came a host

With sheathless rusted swords and rough-hewn
pikes

And age-worn armour, tattered troops intent
On what might fall from fortune's careless
hand ;

Yet in their ranks a knightly leaven moved,
A little band scattered from flank to flank
Of stern-faced men untempered to the cry
Of battle and the process of the field,
Rude zealots stung by seasons of slow pain,
And desecration at their cottage gates,
And chartered spoilers waiting on their days,
Into a silent lifting of the sword
And a great oath before the God of wars
That these things should not be. Their iron
wills

Curbed all the restless ranks ; they were the
seed

Wherefrom should spring a miracle of days,
A wonder to the peoples of the earth ;
And now they gathered in, swift mile by mile,
Upon the laughing legions of the king,
As a great shadow out of Warwick lanes.

As they drew on, went sounding through the
mind

Of one stout captain there the branded tale
That was recorded in the rolls of heaven

Against this curled and pale antagonist.
Oliver Cromwell, leader of a few
Untainted men fostered among the fens,
And stalwart in allegiance to their God,
Sifted the harvest of the turbulent years
That lay behind him in that chosen hour
Through the fine meshes of his single heart,
And gathered for his sacred fostering
A pure clear-tempered wrath. He heard again
The cries of righteous men bowed down in
shame

When shame was nothing due ; he heard the
laws

Shaped not of heaven but of worldly priests
Shouted along the holy aisles ; he saw
The fruits of labour wrested from the hands
That had grown old in tending ; and he felt
The whips that a king hired to scar the flesh
Of strong men seeking but to set aloft
Bare witness that a man bore on his brow
Some token of his kinship to the stars.

Night fell upon the shock of arms opposed
By brother's hand to brother ; fortune ran
Arm-linked with loss, with equal favours flung
To king's men and their foes ; grey shrouds
of death

Flamed sudden into robes of victory ;

Men left their fellows flung to desperate flight
To plunge in headlong passage through the
ranks

Of stricken opposites ; here triumph sang
And here cried desolation from one host.
And all the issue of that Sabbath tale
Was an uncertain rumour. And the stars
Shone over the hushed woods and stubbled
fields,

Where lay in everlasting vigil rapt
Four thousand heritors of English names,
Now gathered to death's garners, thin first-fruits
Of the full harvest drawing to its time.

Dawn over Warwick hills and Warwick lanes,
And through the dawn the legions of the king
Still set for London town, no laughter now
Upon their lips, and dust upon their plumes.
And gathered still as a great shadow set
In tireless watch the iron-hearted men
Whose hands were yet untempered to the sword.
And Cromwell spoke to Hampden, knowing well
How their deep purpose should not break to
bloom

Until their cause was winnowed of the chaff
And all their holy weaponry was purged.
" Your troops may stand not, knowing not the
cause,

Vainglory in their hearts, their arms not
steeled

By thrifty days of service before God,
Servants to whomso bids at hiring-time,
Mere passionless brawlers, drift upon the deeps
Of purifying wrath ; and they are set
Against a might of men whose hearts are fired
With resolution born of ancient blood
Drawn from the veins of sires whose eyes have
met

Great clouds of alien spears unterrified.
In us must move a spirit finely wrought
As theirs, and breeding blows of equal might.
They brave all circumstance with shields
whereon

Are graven boasts that are their heritage ;
Upon our shields we must emblazon then
A pledge yet prouder ; we must march to death
Sworn legions of the living God of days.”
And Hampden doubted ; but in Cromwell then
No question might have home ; he went his
way,

Not seeking how this hope or that should be
Shaped to its end, unheeding any word
Of clouded issues, with a will that knew
No shape of peril standing in the ways
Whereto his face was set, his being vowed
Unto the day of full accomplishment.

THE GATHERING OF THE IRONSIDES

FROM the north to the south he travelled, and
out to the east and west,
And cried as a fiery prophet in lands where the
heathen rest,—
“ The God of battles calls you, and the service
of God is best.”

Through the shades of the Essex woodlands,
along by the Suffolk sea,
And over the fens of Lincoln and little towns
that be
As grey gems set in Huntingdon, crying aloud
went he.

Across the moors of Norfolk, by windy common
and spire,
As a summons out of the heavens from sleep-
ing shire to shire,
This man went seeking, seeking, the men of
his desire.

70 GATHERING OF THE IRONSIDES

“ We seek the men who seek the Lord, we seek
the men who bear
Within their hearts some conscience in the
thing that’s now to dare,
Who ask alone to serve, and let the guerdon
be God’s care.”

And men who smote the anvil and men who
drave the plough,
And men who fostered well the fruits of tilth
and orchard-bough,
Stopped as they heard, and girt good swords
about them with a vow

That the word of this man should prosper.
From seaboard and from fen,
From woodland home and market-place the
call was answered when
It rang across the counties for iron-hearted men.

And now the marshalled armies who ride for
Charles the king
Shall tighten rein and think of death as of a
present thing
When down the lanes of battle the armoured
Ironsides ring.

MARSTON MOOR

No sun across the moors ; the rolling sound
Of thunder, and the gleam of driven rain
Upon the little leaves. The king's men wait
Now songless on the plain, and wait the men
Who no more bend in homage to the king,
Where the plain breaks into a long low hill,
Standing in silent watch among tall corn
That mellows to a bloody harvesting.
Hours pass, and ever grows the far-flung gloom,
And massed above them gathers cloud on
cloud.

Another thunder breaks, a sullen threat
Half-spoken of the cannon, and a threat
Thrown back, and silence over all again.
The full day wanes, full day of the full year,
And through the ragged storm-spent western
sky

The sun flames out, throwing from pikes
ranged up
Like a long fence and painted standard-poles
Long shadows out across the dusky moor.
Then sudden from the watchers in the corn

Goes up a loud deep-throated chant, and then
A little time again no sound. The light
Of evening falls in benediction calm,
And the king's leaders turn to lay them down
From their long vigil. Once again goes up
The measured psalmody, and then a cry
As Cromwell leads four thousand chosen men
Turning nowise to right or left, straight on
Into the shining flower of Rupert's lines.
One moment locked in silent dread embrace
They sway in doubtful issue, then as hail
Driven before the unleashed winds of God
They break and scatter, and along the moors
The van of Cromwell's chosen sends them forth
In bloody ruin to the gates of York.
Yet here alone was any presage seen
That on that day the people should prevail.
As Cromwell saw the laughing chivalry
Of Rupert plunged in flight, he saw the lines
That were the hope of English freedom flung
From centre on to wing in utter rout.
He saw the Scots sucked into slaughter's pool
And Fairfax crushed, and, leader of the host,
The gentle Manchester in disarray
Driven along relentless lanes of death.
And through the mind of Cromwell instant then
Flashed all confusion into perfect light
And victoried order. Of four thousand men

He called on all not levied in pursuit
And as a mighty torrent led them on
Against the exultant legions of the king.
And all the tide of battle was set back,
And curses rang along the summer dusk
As king's men shouting cries of victory
Beheld this sudden peril in their path,
And, holding in dismay, were broken down
And crushed as grain between the grinding
stones.

Till night the slaughter waxed. Across the
moor

As silent ghosts they flickered through the
dusk,

Avengers and the stricken of their wrath.
With wide resistless sweep the flaming sword,
Swung down the sky as by one single might,
Struck into desolation all the host
Of Charles the king that day on Marston Moor,
And winnowed to the service of the cause
Were all the regions of the northern hills.

And Cromwell on that night knelt before God,
And offered up thanksgiving for this thing.
"O Lord, our English land and Thy true Church
In this have had great mercy. Thou didst make
These men to-day as stubble to our swords.
On all men gathered in to-day to Thee

Thy pity, Lord, be plentiful. On those
Who yet are bidden to Thy vineyards here
Send down Thy light, and faith for armoury.
Strengthen us in Thy service, let us keep
Pure hearts and undefiled, and bind us up
In Thy most loving kindness evermore."

So, as the word is written that if two
Or three should meet together in God's name
They shall not ask in vain, and that the faith
Of one may move great mountains, so the sons
Of light, who are a little eager band
Moulding and weaving in the obscure world,
So work among the myriad lives of men
Until their secret vision is fulfilled,
And the large hopes that first are bodied forth
As dreams in their imagined voyaging
Are slowly forged through all the multitudes
Into a durable monument of deeds.
So, when this little sea-locked northern land,
That now, albeit still much wronged and
scarred
With dark abomination, yet is set
High on the windy front of all the world
As the strong home of men whose torch is
borne
In whatso wise they will, was once the haunt
Of men who soiled the plumes of liberty

In dust and set a seal on freedom's lips,
One dreamed a dream, and of his dream there
 sprang
Dreams elsewhere, and in due season grew
From that same dream a purpose, and a fire
To set a passion over all the land.

AN IDYLL

WHILE dawn flashed over those pale hosts
Locked in their everlasting sleep
On Marston Moor, and dew was deep
On beard and blade, as quiet ghosts
Among the slain, with eyes intent
Grave men in holy office went.

Along the fringes of the field
Poor human jackals watched their prey.
No sound was heard along the day
Save the thin clank of arms unsealed
From their last service, and the fall
Of solemn words of burial.

Till on that quiet company
Of ghosted men, whose debt was paid
To earth and the long reckoning made,
There fell from woeful lips a cry,
As one who sought love's ruined gauge
Paused in her tragic pilgrimage,

And stooped in fear to that she knew,
And let her slender fingers move
Curls that her lips were wont in love
To kiss, now wet with blood and dew,
Their treasured gold all splashed with red,
And smoothed them back, and knew her
dead.

To God one witless pitiful call
That this so certain thing might yet
Be cancelled ; then about her set
Relentless walls to prison all
Her being. And in that full tide
Of sorrow one stood by her side

Booted and spurred, with eyes uneased
Of sleep, and leathern jacket stained,
His face scarred deep with knowledge gained
In fiery courses God had pleased,
And asked her of her trouble, mild
As one would ask a little child.

She told him of the goodly pride
Of yester-noon, when he so proud,
So loving proud, had gone unbowed
To serve his king in battle-tide,
She told him of the words of cheer
That he had set against her fear ;

Of all his promises unpaid
That he would hold her yet again
Warm lip to lip—and now the stain
Of death was on those lips, the blade
Was broken and the brow was cold—
This thing and that again she told

In garrulous wise. In Cromwell then
An infinite compassion stirred
And shook his being as he heard,
Well knowing, ere the will of men
Should straighten to the will of God
How hard the road was to be trod ;

How many thousand hearts of love
Should redden all the ways wheredown
The hosts of freedom to their crown
Set far along the days must move,—
How hard the road, how long the night,
The washing of the tears, how white.

A quiet man mid quiet men
He was ; he took her from the place,
Not courtly was his hand, no grace
Of word mocked consolation then,
Yet as he helped her helplessness
A strong and wonderful gentleness

Was on him. And he bade one lead
Her out beyond that visible woe.
She went, nor knew his name who so
Had visited her hour of need.
The Lord's hand wearies not. Who knows
What field shall bear the Master's rose ?

NASEBY

GATHERED at Naseby in Northamptonshire
In the swart glory of barbaric June
Ten thousand stubborn men, marshalled at
dawn
By Thomas Fairfax, watch as for good news.
To-day the thumbs of fate are up or down
Upon no sport or chance unchronicled.
To-day will count among all English days
As that whereon the men from croft and stead,
From market-place and mill, from forge and
loom,
Met after days of discipline and prayer
To try before the eternal assize of God,
Beyond appeal, the issue laid between
The people and the unjust stewards on earth.
To-day shall many a hero go to death
Leaving on earth no monumented name,
No story for his children save the word—
“He fought at Naseby in Northamptonshire.”
To-day, come life or death, shall be set up
Among the shining annals of the world
For some swift moments in the waste of time

When in a corner of the English land,
 Scarce known erewhile to neighbour eyes,
 there rang
 A challenge that should echo down the years,
 Mount up to heaven, measure continents,
 And be as a great beacon lifted up
 Above the hosts who should for ever march
 Burdened with many sins and faiths forsworn
 Yet loyal to one untainted sacred cause,
 The freedom of the soul. Yea, from this day
 All men who set their wills to loosen bonds,
 Grow holy in revolt, break idols down
 Exalted by the priests of tyranny,
 Shall think again, as they go singing on
 To fearless battle, of the men who fight
 To-day at Naseby in Northamptonshire.

Along the ranks of Charles the king there
 passed
 Gibe and chatter of scorn. These motley men
 Taken from trade and craft, from plough and
 pen,
 Who when the seedman moved down furrowed
 fields
 But some short months gone by had heard no
 sound
 Of blade on blade, or gathered aught of war
 Save in old legends and in travellers' tales—

To stand in arms against the chosen bands
Of king's men led by captains tried and proved !
Well may they laugh who fight for Charles the
king.

And, while they laughed, these quiet ten
thousand men
Looked through the dawn as looking for good
news.

For yesternight had Thomas Fairfax sent
One haste post-haste with this to Westminster—
“ Though by your orders none may serve afield
Who is among you in debate, I pray
That you not blindly hold by this resolve
Against our urgent imminent need. In short,
We wait upon a day when shall be weighed
This matter to the scruple of a grain.
Our horsemen, sirs, are brave, their arms are
knit

To smite and spare not, but we look for one
To lead them out as once at Marston Moor
He led. I pray you send upon this word
Oliver Cromwell down to Naseby field.”

Six in the morning ; all the level lands
Shimmered in wonder of may-bloom, and
bright stars

About the meadows, and cool folds of green
Broidered with blossoms waking to the sun,

Lord of the eastern sky where was no cloud.
Full bounty of summer girdled the good earth
That dawn-tide as they watched. Then sudden
lit

Their eyes with laughter, for good tidings came
In a far cloud of dust along the road
Out of the fenland shires. Great cries went up
Full-throated from ten thousand heartened
men,

As out of the dust rolled a long thunder of
hoofs,

And scabbard and plate and helm that shone
in the sun

Grew visible and faces stern yet glad,
And Cromwell with six hundred Ironsides rode
Along the marshalled lines at Naseby field.

And straight he saw move on towards them
there

In ordered march, line justly knit to line,
An equal host of armoured soldiery
Captained by Charles, in nothing unequipped
For any chance of battle. On their tongues
The word was "Mary," chosen by the king,
Remembering the woman whom he loved
Too blindly well ; and from the people's ranks
An opposing cry, " God with us," smote the
day.

Then swiftly Fairfax shaped with Cromwell
there

The order of their battle. On one flank,
Opposing Rupert, Ireton led his horse,
Ireton who left his homestead by the Trent
In Attenborough, hard by Nottingham,
To press his country's battle and his God's.
Along the centre facing equal strength
Of king's men and so furnished, pike-men
moved

And musketeers and sworded soldiery
Welded on foot. And on the other flank
Against the sullen horsemen from the north,
Who bore the king's arms for a bargained wage,
Rode Cromwell with his chosen, who were
sworn

And fiery servants of the Lord of hosts.

So patterned was that field. The centres
locked

And strove, with death a dreadful arbiter,
Till the king's men with unrelenting stroke
Drove back their foes. Not lightly did they
yield,

Those stubborn men-at-arms ; each foot they
gave

Was as the yielding of hewn seasoned oak
To the smith's driven bolt, yet all their pride

Of purpose was as naught. Through Ireton's
line

The swords of Rupert flickered to and fro
And rose and fell in ghostly winnowing,
And here as at the centre peril grew
To havoc and destruction and long flight,
And battle prospered here for Charles the king.
But in that hour when exultation rose
In a great shout along the prevailing ranks
A sudden blast smote back the waves of war,
As once it had so smitten on the day
Of Marston field. As a dread vengeance
hurled

By God's right hand the men of Cromwell
swept

Unscathed among their massed antagonists
And crushed them into ruin, wheeled about
And while their solemn battle-cry rang up—
“God with us—God be with us on this day—
The God of battles”—back they rolled, their
line

Unbroken and their purpose newly steeled,
And on the victors in those farther ranks
They fell as men not armed with earthly arms,
And wrote the issue, word on blinding word,
Of Naseby battle, till the noon-day sun
Looked down upon the legions of the king
Scattered and stark, a memory—no more.

And of that day spoke Cromwell in these words—
“ I can say this of Naseby,—when I saw
The enemy come on in ordered march
Towards us, gallant, armed and captained well,
And we a poor unlettered company,
I, moving then to shape as best I might
Our men for battle, could but smile to God
Praising Him in my heart, and knowing then
That His hand would be with us on that day,
Because it is His holy way to bring
To naught the things that are, and magnify
The things that are not. We, a company
Ignorant of many things, yet rode that day
Most wise of God’s good rule. They laughed
at us,
Those soldiers of the king, and laughing so
They laughed at God, and God’s hand smote
them there.”

That night one rode to Westminster with this—
“ Here is God’s work—to God alone the praise.
Your general¹ in this matter served you well,
Yet would he perish rather than assign
Unto himself the glory which is God’s.
And honest men drew swords for you to-day ;
Sir, I beseech you, hinder them in naught
That may for ever set upon their hearths
The liberty whereto they spend their blood,

¹ Fairfax.

And lead them to the threshold of their God,
 Denied by no man. And in this he rests
 Who is your servant humbly in this thing,
 Oliver Cromwell."

Thence from day to day
 About the land in siege and blinding storm
 His hand was put to breaking what might be
 Yet whole in sworn allegiance to the king,
 Until the end, until the pitiful end.

As once along the Gadarean steeps
 One crying up and down in torment ran
 Stricken of unclean spirits, and the Lord
 In mercy cast the devils to the sea—
 Nowise in hate, not using heavenly might
 For aught save pity—that this man should be
 First cleansed and so should nurture through
 his days

An upright heart and pure, and build at last
 A new and blameless city in his soul,
 So now God worked through Cromwell in
 that day

To purge the body of this English land
 Of hosts unholy, that thenceforth should rise
 A shining state, re-fashioned on the dust
 And ruin of a dead, dishonoured tale.

THE FOURTH INTERLUDE

OF WAR

*THE strength of your arm that is lifted to break
The delight of your equals in dust, O man,
Does it strike for the men who lamenting make
The dead man grieve for the quick man's sake,
For the hope that was sown when the years
began
Of love that is yet to wake ?*

*Is death but a sound of the travelling wind,
But a sound that is spent between shore and
shore ?*

*Is it this, O man, as you battle to find,
Be the cost as it may, the unclouded mind
That is shamed of the debt denied no more
Of man to his stricken kind ?*

*For one who in beauty is mighty to shine,
A beacon above your ways, for decrees
Forsworn, for a broken countersign,
For a birthright mocked, for a ruined shrine,
To-day do you ride, O man, for these,
A lord of the battle-line ?*

*Then thus it is well ; you are quitted and made
One with the lords constrained to fight
Since wrong so wills, till the day shall fade,
If the day shall dawn, when, last arrayed
For death maybe, the legions of light
Shall ride to the last crusade.*

*But hired of an alien will do you ride
On a foe unloathed for a shameful wage,
Do you traffic in death as a trade, divide
The spoils of the weak, and the weak deride,
And, faring no more as on pilgrimage,
Cast out love's self, denied—*

*So signed is your cause ? Do you dare to steer
So rotten a ship on so stern a stream ?
Do you think that the love betrayed will fear
The bought array of your fighting-gear ?
Will you mock the skies and the gods blas-
pheme ?
So be it. The gods will hear.*

THE ENTRY INTO LONDON

ALONG the streets of London town
Full twenty thousand men go down
 In fighting gear and with faces beaten
To little of laughter in battle's frown.

They see the woeful threshing-floor
Of Naseby field and Marston Moor,
 And the driven flail of the God of battles,
And the dust about the homeland door.

These things they see, these things alone,
And the people watch, and the thing is
 known
 That long had lain as a treasure hidden
Under the wedged and trodden stone.

Of holy heart and blameless hand
These men had borne along the land
 The sword that shattered the hosts that
 wasted
The things of truth as a little sand.

And now the day, and now the day
Whereon these men alone should weigh

The issue, measuring not in anger,
Yet sworn to strike as goodmen may.

And well the curléd king may frown

And well the queen in her scented gown,

For twenty thousand men are marching
Along the streets of London town.

JUDGMENT

ETERNAL righteousness that brood'st above
Man's travel in the world, O leaven dear,
Working among the congregations met
In so brief conflict, bidding all great sins,
All pain and desolation, tyrannous grief,
Desires uncrowned yet holy, all sad things
Bow down before th' immortal circumstance
Of pity's sovran rule and cry aloud
That over all the sorrows of the world
Begotten out of error, still supreme
In men is beauty of compassionate law,
How yet will one in blindness lift his hand
Against thy purpose and most high decree.
This king of men, this puppet of the days,
This twig set high among the winds of the world,
This fool of time, so fostered in his heart
This most vain thing. Might not a man so
 play
With words and juggle thus with circumstance,
And smile to north and south, turn many
 tunes
To please all fancies, season all with craft,

And trick at last the will of things that are ?
Might not one mummer soul set back the hands
That hold the everlasting mastery ?
So dreamed the king, and now relentless dawn
Broke on the dream, dawn and the terrible
day.

“ Vouchsafe us but this latest mercy, Lord,
And he whose hand has driven bolts of war
In pitiless confusion through the land
Shall answer all.” So had the words gone up
From twenty thousand hearts on Preston field.
And now the mercy had been shown, and now
The might was given, and the answer now
Should not be lightly proven.

Charles the king,
When London streets were grey with winter's
blade
And powdered snow was driven along the
stones,
Into the Hall of Westminster was led,
And faced his judges. Blood and terrible days,
And ghosted kinsmen, violated oaths,
And sacred things defiled, and hearts debased
From high and urgent longing towards God—
These rose between accusers and accused,
Between the stern and battle-proven men
Who sat in the high seats at Westminster

And Charles, who stood with folded arms, and
plume

Falling unshaken over comely curls,
And spake with calm that never had he known
In the long days of craft and cunning toil—
“What right have you in this? What
privilege

Has fallen on you now to try a king?
You bid me answer this or that, you cry
For due account, you measure up my days,
You question God’s anointed. By what
right?”

His judges answered not, but through the Hall
Rang cries and curses from the soldiery,
Calling for justice on the traitor’s head,
Wild curses born of fury prisoned up
Through days of peril and bloody sacrifice.
Then silence over all, and slowly then
The accusation fell from passionate lips,
Quiet with great strength, not labouring any
word,

Not fashioned of revenge, set above hate,
Untouched of pity, as some issue wrought
Indifferently by unrelenting hands
Not cast in mortal mould. “This king of men
Has soiled his holy office, and betrayed
The trust of all his people. He has slain
His own, and put the word of God to shame.

The sceptre that is sacred unto peace
Has been in this man's hand a bloody mace
Of tyrannous usage. He has broken oath.
He has been steadfast not in word or deed.
He took the high king's crown, the sign and
pledge

Of sovran love, and put it out to use
To glut the scullion fancy of a day.
To his great place and his renowned name
He has been false. We name him in this hour,
Charles, traitor to his people." And the king
Neither denial made nor any plea,
As still one desperate answer—"By what
right ?"—

Fell from his lips, as from the errant lips
Of captives to inscrutable circumstance
Since chaos trembled into marvellous law.
Three days the torches flared along the Hall,
And the wind moaned and drave great clouds
of snow

Against the fretted windows, and the stones
Rang as tuned iron beneath the tread of men
Passing along the streets with wondering eyes
Fixed on the storied walls wherein was held
This council dread. Three grey and terrible
days

Words moulded words and purpose purpose
shaped,

And then the bidding—" You have heard
what thing

Is charged against this man. All words are said,
The cause is tried. To judgment you are
called."

Hushed were the judges then ; the men-at-arms
Stood motionless as graven soldiery

In some old woven fable, and no sound
Was heard save winter's trouble in the air.

Then one spake slowly,—“ Do you here pro-
nounce

Charles King of England traitor to the land,
Forsworn, a sinner guilty unto death ? ”

They rose. A moment passed. And then the
word

Fell naked on eternity—" We do."

In Whitehall Cromwell waits, and with him there
Ireton and Fairfax, watching to the end

Of this so tragic shaping of their hands ;

A sound of muffled feet and swinging gates,

A figure curled and pale between his guards,

A falling cloak, a murmur of ghostly words,

A hush, and one swift flashing of an axe.

In Windsor aisle, between the carven seats,

There is a stone whereon no legend runs

Save the unhappy name of Charles the king.

THE FIFTH INTERLUDE

OF TYRANNY

*O SUPPLICATING hands, bewildered eyes,
Lips bloody with reiterated cries,
What word of ours may profit you, what blame
Cast on your spoilers may redeem your name,
Or heal in anywise
Your bodies scarred, your spirits bruised in
shame ?*

*Our pity as our succour shall abate
No whit of all your sorrow, your estate
Shall be among the dust to fall and bleed ;
Tormenting, they shall take not any heed,
Who spend not even their hate,
Of wrath of ours begotten of your need.*

*They use you thus, they break you to their wills,
You are but corn crushed in their fortified mills ;
They sin, but, men, they do not sin alone,
You also sin whose lives are overthrown,
Whose patient pleading fills
One interlude and then no more is known.*

*His hand who wrongs you does no deeper wrong
Than his who seeks not, albeit weak or strong,
To stay the tyrannous soilure, and of none
Save you who sorrow may this thing be done,
Nor shall your sword and song
Save by your arm and lips salute the sun.*

*Deliverers are there none but you so bowed,
Nor might to humble these so basely proud,
None other may redeem you and release
Your fettered limbs or bid your shame to cease ;
Cry not to us aloud,
Compassion may we bring you, but not peace.*

*By these things suffered in your fatherland,
By Milton's word and Cromwell's winnowing
hand,
By your green ways and shining leagues of foam,
By England's name, by Athens and by Rome
Let tyrants bear their brand,
Rise up and strike your spoilers and strike
home.*

THE THIRD OF SEPTEMBER

I

1650

DUNBAR

SODDEN the sheaves and pale the light of the
moon,
Watery-pale in the driven rainy wrack,
And the wind in the Dunbar hills is piping a
tune
Of battle and death and love and the lover's
lack.

And they gird themselves in the dawn who will
fight again,
Breaking the peace of the day for the days
to be,
And the wrath of God shall quicken the wrath
of men
Beneath the hills that look to the northern
sea.

“The Lord of Hosts!”—and the word is
spoken well

As among the soaked and yellow shocks they
sweep.

And Dunbar town shall have a tale to tell,
And Dunbar day shall be a day to keep.

Stricken the blow ; the shafted golden light
Breaks through the mellow mists of autumn-
tide

As Cromwell's chosen scatter into flight
The antagonists of love and lords of pride.

And mid the roar of ruin Cromwell cries
On all his people and exhorts them there
To echo through the temple of the skies
Glad words of praise and humble words of
prayer.

Rank upon rank drawn under the cloudy
hill

They offer to God the words that for God were
sung,

Ironside men of the iron fighting will,
Of mighty sworded arm and boastless tongue—

O praise the Lord, all ye nations :

Praise Him, all ye people.

For His merciful kindness is great towards us :

And the truth of the Lord endureth for ever.

Praise ye the Lord.

II

1651

WORCESTER

THE Severn tide swings up and down
From the great sea by town and town,
And where the tower of Worcester stands
Among the loaded orchard-lands,
As holy news for ever set
Above the Severn tide, are met
At their last battle-tryst the men
Who came from moor and misty fen
At the call of a man who cried aloud
That the Lord of Hosts was riding.

One furrow more and the field is ploughed,
And the Ironsides are riding.

From dawn along the day to night
On Worcester walls is bent the might
Of men whose battle never failed,
And Worcester walls are scarred and scaled.

And never more the men, whose name
Is writ with theirs who bore the flame
High in the desolate Trojan days,
Shall break upon the battle ways
As driven hail and thunder.

The deeds are wrought, and won the praise
And the immortal wonder.

The stars look out on Worcester town,
On Severn tide the stars look down,
From orchard bough and sickled corn
Sweet scents of the full year are borne
To men who watch and men who sleep
And men whose rest is over-deep.
Had Cromwell prayed,—“ Now show us, Lord,
The crowning mercy of Thy sword.”
The crowning mercy is bequeathed
By God. The Ironside sword is sheathed.

III

1658

WHITEHALL

Chorus of Desires.

In love or in scorn did He build us, and
quicken our breath ?
Dreaming of wonderful life, did He dream of
death ?
Does He lead man into the night foreknowing
the end ?
Does death defy Him at last, or is death His
friend ?

Chorus of Reasons.

'Tis given to man to live, but nothing to
know
Of the secret ways whereto he shall surely go.
Yet, knowing nothing, to dare, and, being
blind,
To know not fear—that is the comely mind,—

That is the doom of man and the high renown,
 The scourge and travelling staff and the starry
 crown ;
 He falls in the press when the long day's fight
 is done
 And knows not whether the battle be lost
 or won.

Cromwell.

Thy loving-kindness has been great,
 And great Thy blessing of the sword,
 Thy hand has prospered my estate,
 I was not worthy, Lord.

My service has been sanctified
 In Thine acceptance, and I come
 Into Thy courts unterrified,
 Taking them for my home.

Not any worth of mine I trust,
 Nor love that I have given Thee,
 But Thy sweet spirit in my dust,
 Thy love that is in me.

The world is moving far away,
 The battle cries, the long desire,
 The trouble of my little day,
 And the consuming fire.

With nought of right or claim I stand,
 A pilgrim at Thy outer gate,
 Thou wilt not turn away Thy hand,
 Thou wilt not cry, "Too late."

Chorus of Desires.

Howbeit to us it is given to know that the end
 Is veiled from the vision of man, and the way he
 shall wend
 When his lips are grown cold,—here is one who
 is locked in belief,
 Is it vain, all his hope, his defiance, denial of
 grief?

Chorus of Reasons.

What matter the end, so believing govern a
 soul
 That terror is bowed? To the dreamer the
 dream is the goal;
 Seeing his God in his vision he sees Him indeed,
 Imagining peace, he has peace for his utmost
 need.

Cromwell.

An end is made. I see Thee now
 Whom I have sought so very long,
 Thy hand is cool upon my brow,
 I know not any wrong.

From travel in the dusty ways,
From strife of speech and sounding sword,
I come, undaunted of the days,
 Into Thy keeping, Lord.

EPILOGUE

*COME tell us, you that travel far
With brave or shabby merchandise,
Have you saluted any star
That goes uncourtiered in the skies ?*

*Do you remember leaf or wing
Or brook the willows leant along,
Or any small familiar thing
That passed you as you went along ?*

*Or does the trade that is your lust
Drive you as yoke-beasts driven apace,
Making the world a road of dust
From market-place to market-place ?*

*You traffic in the grain, the wine,
In purple and in cloth of gold,
In treasure of the field and mine,
In fables of the poets told,—*

*But have you laughed the wine-cups dry
And on the loaves of plenty fed,
And walked, with all your banners high,
In gold and purple garmented ?*

*And do you know the songs you sell
And cry them out along the way ?
And is the profit that you tell
After your travel day by day*

*Sinew and sap of life, or husk—
Dead coffer-ware or kindled brain ?
And do you gather in the dusk
To make your heroes live again ?*

*If the grey dust is over all,
And stars and leaves and wings forgot,
And your blood holds no festival—
Go out from us ; we need you not.*

*But if you are immoderate men,
Zealots of joy, the salt and sting
And savour of life upon you—then
We call you to our counselling.*

*And we will hew the holy boughs
To make us level rows of oars,
And we will set our shining prows
For strange and unadventured shores.*

*Where the great tideways swiftliest run
We will be stronger than the strong,
And sack the cities of the sun,
And spend our booty in a song.*

THE END

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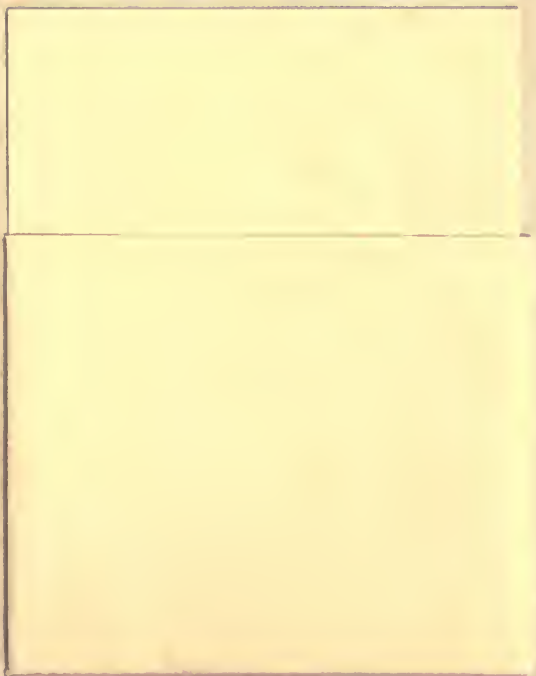
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